

The News-Review

Misleading debate surrounding Measure 105 begins

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The misleading debate surrounding Oregon's sanctuary law has begun.

We knew it was coming, but we didn't think it would start so soon.

On Monday, 16 sheriffs serving Oregon counties — including Douglas County Sheriff John Hanlin — signed a letter encouraging Oregonians to vote for Measure 105, which would repeal the state's 31-year-old sanctuary law. As written, the law states no Oregon law enforcement agency will use public money or personnel to arrest people whose only crime is being in the country illegally.

We've got no problem with the sheriffs working together and taking a stand, but we're not encouraged by their tactics.

The letter invokes the murder of 20-year-old Mollie Tibbetts, the Iowa woman who was allegedly killed by an undocumented man, despite her family objecting to the politicization of the tragic event.

"Mollie was killed, and a man has been arrested and charged with her murder," wrote Sandi Tibbetts Murphy, a relative of the deceased woman. "Yes, that man is an immigrant to this country, with uncertainty as to his legal status. But it matters not."

"It is not your right to exacerbate this grievous act by hijacking Mollie and all she believed with your racist fear-mongering. You do not get to use her murder to inaccurately promote your 'permanently separated' hyperbole. You do not have permission to callously use this tragedy to demonize an entire population for the acts of one man," she continued.

Oregon's sheriffs are concerned with our safety — they're elected to do so — but leveraging Tibbetts's murder isn't the right choice here. It's the easy one.

First off, several studies have looked at the connection between immigration and crime and the research is clear: Undocumented immigrants aren't more likely to commit crimes compared to native-born citizens. In fact, they're much less likely, according to the [Cato Institute](#) and the journal [Criminology](#). The authors of the journal found that "increases in the undocumented immigrant population within states are associated with significant decreases in the prevalence of violence."

A chart produced by the [Pew Research Center](#) also shows low crime rates among first-generation immigrants. It does, however, show that crime rates do rise among second-generation immigrants, but researchers said the group is just "catching up" to the crime rate displayed by native-born Americans.

None of this is to say that 24-year-old Cristhian Bahena Rivera, the Mexican national who was arrested in connection to the murder, shouldn't be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law if

found guilty. But allowing elected officials — from Iowa, Oregon and Washington D.C. — to take the easy way out when negotiating policy is unacceptable.

As Tibbett's aunt, Billie Jo Calderwood, said in a statement: "Evil comes in EVERY color." With that out of the way, let's get back to arguing over the actual merits and flaws of Measure 105.